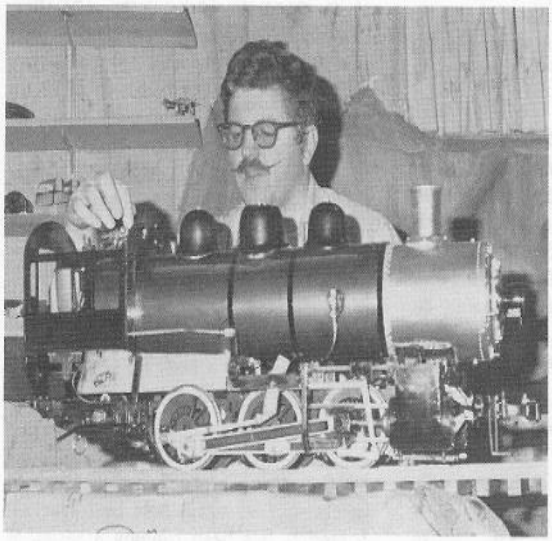
MMR_0060 Ralph W. Hawes

Ralph was awarded Master Model Railroader #60 on February 24, 1975, thus becoming the first MMR in the Rocky Mountain Region. Ralph has been an active Region member since 1960, serving as a board member in the region on several occasions, frequently working as a region contest judge, and chairing the committee which helped the late "Bill" Cohen publish his book "Lettering Guide to Early Colorado Narrow Gauge Freight Cars." Since the book is still available, Ralph continues to serve in the chairman capacity handling the book work and mailing duties.

HO modeling started in high school in Pittsfield, New Hampshire, with a Varney box car. Model railroading being a contagious disease, an "English Yard Bird" soon followed. Being a tinkerer and a New England spendthrift, the scratch building urge came naturally when a large bass wood tree was felled by him for firewood. Not wanting to waste all that beautiful wood, a diesel hood unit was constructed. After high school a four year hitch in the navy slowed the modeling efforts, but was stimulated again when a large HO layout, partially completed was found, under the swimming pool at Adak, Alaska. This stimulated scratch building and several structures were constructed during this period out of whatever could be found, later to be shipped home in a 5-lb. coffee can.



RALPH W. HAWES, MMR No. 60

After the Navy, Kalamazoo, Michigan, became home while studying Industrial Engineering at Western Michigan University. During this time period the "Michigan and Mount Washington Railroad" was born. This empire in HO occupied at various times the parimeter of the bedroom and then a 4 x 12 foot area in the family basement. Upon graduation Ralph and his bride of one year headed for California to seek employment. A short stop in Denver to visit friends resulted in a permanent home. A house purchased in 1963 had a railroad started in the 41' x 26' basement even before the plaster had dried. This afforded the necessary room for a 6' long dual gauge curved trestle which was scratch built while living in a mobile home. The Michigan and Mount Washington railroad has been growing until it just about covers the entire basement. Shortly after arriving in Colorado, narrow gauge railroading was discovered and the M&MW soon had an HOn3 addition called the "Brimstone Gulch" division. The HO-HOn3 empire grew

until it now contains about 400' or 6½ scale miles of hand laid code 70 track placed on individual ties for the main line, half of which is dual gauge with 20 scratch built dual gauge switches and umteen regular point switches. Two cabs control the broad (4'8½") gauge with a separate cab to control the Colorado standard gauge (3').

During the past 5 or 6 years a 1" scale 0-6-0 live steamer has also taken shape and is now 99 44/100% complete with the initial steam up scheduled for spring. Ralph says, "if you want a real scratch building education, try live steam." A second live steamer is on the drawing board. This will be a 2½" scale Denver South Park and Pacific #71, 2-6-0 as built in 1884.

Currently the M&MW is inoperative due to extensive remodeling of the basement. It may take a few years, but some day it will be all put together and 50 to 60-car trains will run again.

In his spare time Ralph and wife, Alice, find time for snowmobiling, jeeping, camping, photography, their dog, "Jeep," and prototype railroading, Colorado style.

Both have been active volunteers for the "Slim Gauge News," now being carried on by the "Narrow Gauge and Short Line Gazette." Ralph wrote articles and photographed most of the model and product review items and Alice was the editor for the last edition of the SGN, among other things. Although never getting too involved in the building of models, Alice has been RMR region secretary for the past 8 years and with Ralph, has co-hosted two Region Conventions, and assisted in several of Ralph's clinic presentations.

In order to afford their hobbies, Alice teaches school full time and Ralph is a Research Engineer in Environmental Control for Dow Chemical Company.